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AUTHOR McComas, James D.
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ABSTRACT

Future concerns that member institutions of the Southern Association of Land-Grant Colleges and State Universities share and perspectives on academic leadership for the future are considered. Future concerns include implications of the trend to have an abbreviated university week, a tendency toward larger faculty workloads, the need for financial support to encourage doctoral study in engineering and related sciences, a need to further develop and improve elementary and secondary education, the need for universities to share with local and state governments in the effort to attract high technology and other industries to the South, the challenge of complying with federal legislation regarding racial and sexual discrimination in higher education, the need for universities to gain greater public confidence since legislatures have been increasingly controlling, and the need to find new and creative ways of funding higher education. It is suggested that in the future administrators should be prepared to: derive self-satisfaction from successfully performing job duties to offset the trend of criticism; realize that the positions of president and vice president for academic affairs will become more vulnerable as the reallocation of resources is necessary; experience a shorter period of tenure; counteract the trend of accrediting agencies making demands that are increasingly difficult to meet with today's resources; be more aggressive in recognizing and promoting scholarship among students and faculty; promote basic research as an investment in the future; and develop an approach that stresses the intangibles of a college degree. Appended information includes: the illiteracy rate by state reported by the Southern Regional Education Board; a ranking of southern states according to the percentage of the adult population with less than high school completion, 1974; and grade completion level by region, 1975. (SW)

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A Blueprint for the Future of the Southern Association of Land-Grant Colleges and State Universities

James D. McComas

Southern Association of
Land-Grant Colleges and State Universities
Atlanta, Georgia
September 24, 1980

A few weeks ago I was asked to present a paper on higher education in the eighties for a working conference of our faculty and staff.[1] I am taking the liberty of sharing a copy of that paper with you so that I will not be making the same presentation. You will note in the paper that an attempt was made to support the notion of shorter-range planning of a four or five year period since economic, social and legislative changes make it difficult to project for a longer period. There are three additions to the paper which were included in the original but not printed in the final copy since these points could create external difficulties. The first item concerned the shrinking university week. Just a few years ago most universities had 7:30 morning and evening classes and many freshmen could count on a Tuesday, Thursday, and

[1] McComas, James D., "Higher Education in the Eighties," Faculty Development Conference, Mississippi State University, August 23, 1980.

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Saturday class in English or biology. Few classes are now held on our campuses after noon on Fridays. Essentially we now have a four to four-and-one-half day week at best. What are the legislative implications for the abbreviated university week?

An additional point contained in the paper concerned faculty loads. It appears likely that professors in the future will teach more hours and larger classes. (Several of you indicated pressure in this direction as you responded to the questionnaire sent to you.)

The third point purposely omitted from the original copy of the paper and perhaps one of the most far-reaching is the population of international students in today's engineering programs. Higher salaries commanded by our graduates with a bachelor's degree are discouraging advanced study at the master's and Ph.D. levels by our own citizens. In the very near future we may find that there are few if any native Americans completing Ph.D.'s in engineering and related sciences. What are the implications for energy and energy-related research? I would suggest that this is a local, regional, and national problem. Universities simply cannot compete with industry in the payment of graduate stipends. Graduate stipends in the neighborhood of $15,000 to $20,000 must be provided to encourage doctoral study and a significant amount of this support must come from federal and business sources.

Let me add that I believe that international students are an essential part in the life of a comprehensive university such as the one I represent.

As we look to the future, it does seem that the universities represented in our association do share some common concerns. These might include the following:

1. **There is a need to further develop and improve elementary and secondary education.** The high dropout rates in Southern schools, the number of adults who are functionally illiterate, and the level of education of all adults in most Southern states should be of concern to us.[2] We do have the challenge and opportunity to see more of our young people graduate from high school and with an improvement in basic skills. A smaller percentage of our high school graduates is attending college than is true for most parts of the country. Ernest Boyer has presented some ideas about universities which may help improve our schools. I commend his article for your reading.[3] We do know that those with the least skills are the first to be unemployed and that one who is economically dependent on others cannot be socially free.

2. **Economic development should become a shared responsibility.** Perhaps you have seen recent statements and analyses which indicate that the South may lose its special advantages in the areas of energy, labor, and other resources which have been attracting new industries. Universities can play a more aggressive role as a partner with state and local government in attracting high technology industry and other industries to our respective states. Most of us can provide an immediate supply of well prepared personnel and our engineers and other scientists can provide consultation as needed.

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[2]See Appendix.

[3]Boyer, Ernest L., "Quality and the Campus: The High School/College Connection," **AAHE Bulletin**, Vol. 32, No. 9, May 1980, p. 5.

3. **Complying with Federal Court expectations, affirmative action, and the various titles remains a challenge.** Most of the states not in compliance with Federal Court orders to desegregate higher education are represented by the universities in our association. Four of the ten Southeastern Conference schools have complaints pending against them concerning women's athletics. Lest any here feel comfortable, perhaps a review in the near future by the Office of Federal Contracts and Compliance from the Department of Labor regarding grants and contracts will give some new challenges. However, a bigger but related challenge is what can universities do to promote and improve a better understanding among and between races? Will our society lose some of the gains made in human understanding and concern? Will we become more polarized? What can and should universities do?

4. **What can universities do to gain greater public confidence?** We have considerable evidence that state legislatures have become more controlling and are leaving individual universities with fewer choices. Next to inflation most of you listed this as a major concern. Perhaps too few of our faculty members know and understand what is happening. Deans and department heads or chairpersons are bemoaning the smaller and smaller areas over which they and their colleagues can make decisions. As one president remarked on his questionnaire, "Fewer dollars to the university make more controls and centralization necessary." In recent years many universities have not been assured of a given budgetary amount for even a year as impoundments, lagging revenues, and enrollment-driven formulae with under or over estimated enrollments have altered funding within a fiscal year. (Oregon with first a proposed 30 percent cut then an 8 percent cut caused the chancellor there to remark that it is like getting an opinion that you must have your arms and legs amputated, and then seeking a second opinion and finding that the doctor has good news — only one of your arms and only one leg will have to be amputated."[4])

5. **New and creative ways of funding higher education must be found.** Harold Enarson summarized the problem well as he stated:

> Urgently needed is a new formula for calculating budget support for our state universities. The Board of Regents and the legislature are working on the problem. They recognize that any formula for the 1980s must be geared less to numbers and enrollment growth, as the present formula is, and more to the special costs that follow the special missions the state has assigned each institution. . . .
>
> State support for our universities also must be linked in some realistic way to inflation. Our state universities cannot offset 18 percent inflation with the six percent budget increase the state provided for in the 1979-80 academic year.
>
> State support in the 1980s also needs to take into account the fixed costs any university incurs simply by opening its doors for business. Whether enrollment goes up or down, fixed costs continue — in operating a physical plant, in operating a library, in dozens of other ways on every campus.[5]

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[4]Magarrell, Jack, "Recession Forces Cuts in Spending at Many State Colleges," **The Chronicle of Higher Education**, September 2, 1980, p. 3.

[5]Enarson, Harold, "Standing at New Threshold," **Monthly**, The Ohio State University, September 1980, p. 9.

Associated with this problem is a need to find qualitative indices for academic programs. A bachelor's degree earned at our Meridian Branch campus and taught by a small number of faculty members is not the same degree as those offered on our main campus by some 800 faculty members. A cosmopolite student population on the main campus also makes a different kind of college degree. This topic alone would be sufficient for a future conference. I would like to see the universities represented assign staff members to a task force in this area.

6. **Intercollegiate athletics will increase in cost more rapidly than most programs.** Air transportation, motels, meals, and other associated costs have increased more than most campus based programs. The basic question is, will we develop an even greater dependency on those outside the university for support and thus lose much of the control which remains on the campus?

Academic Leadership for the Future

What "breed of cat" will be needed for tomorrow's university presidency? Will it be a John Silber, a Peter McGrath, or some other type of leadership yet to be defined? The same question might be posed for the increasingly difficult post of academic vice president. If graduate programs are reduced as some have suggested, then the position of graduate dean may be less popular and more difficult as well.

I do not have sources of information unavailable to you. Many of you are more experienced and much wiser, but it appears to me that tomorrow's administrator should be prepared to:

1). Receive sufficient self satisfaction from the successful performance of his or her role to offset the trend which is directed more toward criticism and less toward praise.

2). Realize that the positions of president and vice president for academic affairs will become more vulnerable as the reallocation of resources is necessary. The implications are clear too for the dean whose college resources must be allocated to another college! How does one maintain a sense of community in this kind of setting? What can be done to minimize the negative aspects of reallocation of resources?

3). Be prepared for a shorter period of tenure than is now the case. Perhaps ten years will become the upper limit one can expect to remain in the same role in the same institution.

4). Experience increased difficulty in helping the university remain as a place for an open forum where both popular and unpopular ideas may be expressed and explored. The pressures are subtle but real in this area.

5). Counteract the trend of accrediting agencies which are making demands which are increasingly difficult to meet with today's resources. (Travel, resource personnel, off-campus instruction, faculty loads, and facilities are some of the areas where they cite themselves as the authority. All eligible programs at my own university are accredited, but most of us can see problems ahead if accrediting standards do not have some flexibility incorporated in them.)

6). Prepare to take a more aggressive role in recognizing and promoting scholarship both among students and the faculty. How much thought and discussion are given to scholarship in our universities? What is scholarship? How is it recognized and how is it rewarded? What are we doing for today's entering assistant

professors to let them know what we expect from one who has achieved professorial maturity? Most university promotion and tenure policies tell us very little about such expectations.

7). Promote basic research as an investment in the future. Several universities in our association are among the top one hundred in attracting outside funds for research. Our capability in research will increase over the years. A recent article summarizes a concern which is shared by many of us:

> But there is now compelling evidence to suggest that America's private sector is in the midst of a technological drouth — an inability to develop 'pivotal' inventions.
>
> 'The United States has not originated a single invention capable of leading even to a small new industry since 1967, and no invention capable to produce a major new industry since 1947,' says Dr. Michael Boretsky, a senior policy analyst for the Commerce Department and a leading federal authority on productivity and innovation. The finger of blame for this erosion is being pointed by government and academic experts squarely at the executive suites of U.S. corporations. The experts say the emphasis in managerial philosophy over the past 25 years has gradually switched from long-range research and development, which could produce major discoveries, to short-term profits — 'bottom line management.'
>
> Many corporations are no longer run by executives who have scientific and engineering backgrounds — in other words, innovators. They are being replaced by lawyers and accountants, meaning that the push from the top for new innovation has, in some cases, been de-emphasized. In other instances, it has come to a dead halt.[6]

Our government too has behaved somewhat like business and industry. A failure to invest in our long-term future at a period of economic stability or in a period of limited growth creates the climate for a self-fulfilling prophecy. A heavier investment in our future through basic research is needed now. We have the closest relationships with our Congressmen of any university groups in this country. We now have the institutional capabilities to participate fully in those basic research efforts. We could mount a regional effort in this regard which would have national importance.

8). Develop an approach which stresses the **intangibles** of a college degree. Most of our approach has been on the economic benefits of a college education. Does a college degree develop a more compassionate, more humane, and less selfish individual? Does a college degree help us to better understand ourselves in relationship to others, other cultures, other religions, other forms of government and other systems of education? Does a college degree help one to be a better legislator, mayor, or leader in business and industry? What kind of culture does our university transmit? Whatever the culture, the tone is set by the president, vice president, graduate dean, academic dean, department heads, and over time by the faculty.

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[6]Hildreth, James (Newhouse News Service). "U.S. Failure to Innovate at the Top," **The Commercial-Appeal**, Memphis, Tennessee, September 21, 1980, Section G, p. 3.

Summary

Inflation, an older and tenured faculty, state and federal controls, declines in college-age population, an increasingly pessimistic and skeptical society all cause us to ask, "Is there hope?" Yes. But we are going to have to change our approaches and perhaps our styles. We are going to need more information earlier. We are going to need to find ways which will encourage faculty to deal with ambiguity and tentativeness which are a real part in the life of today's university.

Do we still like what we do? Do we feel uncomfortable if we admit that there are some aspects of our roles which are not unpleasant? After all, as one of our colleagues has noted, it is not easy to be a parent either! To me, the thing which makes it all worthwhile is the number of promising young people who are at our universities. They make our roles bearable and life worthwhile.

APPENDIX

Illiteracy Rate By State Reported by SREB
September 22, 1980

Source quoted was stated to be the most current SREB had available regarding population literacy.

Quoted definition of illiteracy: "Persons unable to read and write in any language."

Percent of Total Population
14 years and older by State (Nationwide 1.2%)

Alabama	2.1%
Arkansas	1.8%
Florida	1.3%
Georgia	2.0%
Kentucky	1.6%
Louisiana	2.8%
Maryland	0.9%
Mississippi	2.4%
South Carolina	2.3%
Tennessee	1.7%
Texas	2.2%
Virginia	1.4%
West Virginia	1.4%

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census Statistical Abstract, 1979.

States Ranked According to Percentage of Adult Population With Less Than High School Completion, 1974

Rank	State	Percent of Adult Population With Less Than High School Completion	Total Adult Population	Rank by Population	Adult Population with Less Than High School Completion
1.	Kentucky	53.3	2,229,676	23	1,188,000
2.	South Carolina	52.4	1,745,829	26	916,775
4.	Arkansas	52.1	1,342,032	32	700,712
5.	Georgia	51.0	3,122,093	15	1,595,415
6.	Mississippi	50.7	1,466,697	29	744,623
7.	Alabama	50 7	2,349,346	21	1,191,792
8.	Tennessee	50.5	2,745,755	17	1,387,575
9.	West Virginia	50.3	1,233,143	34	621,314
10.	Louisiana	49.1	2,403,840	20	1,180,582
12.	Texas	45.1	7,635,716	4	3,445,926
13.	Virginia	44.6	3,232,792	14	1,442,498
16.	Florida	42.0	4,912,428	9	2,066,790
20.	Maryland	40.8	2,686,019	18	1,096,992

Source: Adult Illiteracy in the United States, Carman St. John Hunter and David Harman C 1979

Grade Completion Level by Region, 1975
(ages 25 and over, both sexes, all races)

	Less than Grade School Completion	or percentage of	Less than High School Completion
North Central	2,359,000	21%	11,306,000
Northeast	2,792,000	27%	10,386,000
West	1,649,000	28%	5,974,000
South	6,749,000	42%	16,147,000
Totals	13,549,000		43,813,000

Source: Current Population Reports, p.20, #295, 1976.